CREATOR

VOLUME 18 NUMBER 1

THE BEAUTY OF CHRIST

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare (Isaiah 55:2 b).

Our Lord intensely desires for us to find joy in His glory for all eternity (John 17:24). In preparation for this, we set before you now choice portions of Christ's beauty found in creation. And we hope that these morsels of His vast loveliness will whet your appetite to know Him better: *Taste and see that the LORD is good* (Psalm 34:8a)

Please savor nature's beauties as "hors d'oeuvres"—the heavenly feast is being prepared (Revelation 19:9). For me, cherishing the beauty of Christ in creation is like snacking on green olives before a traditional Thanksgiving meal . . . or maybe you would prefer something less salty. The point being, olives help me to anticipate the turkey dinner all the more!

Christ's beauty here on Earth is like *an enormous plate* of hors d'oeuvres, and is a foretaste of His glory, which is already being revealed. Or we might think of nature's witness as a *fragrance* of His glory—the wonderful aroma of a banquet to be fully enjoyed in Heaven (2 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Peter 4:13).

Do you desire to experience the beauty of Christ, as King David did (Psalm 27:4)? Is your daily prayer like that of blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)? When Jesus passed by him, Bartimaeus had just one request of the Lord —*he wanted to see*. And when Jesus granted him sight, what did Bartimaeus do? He followed our Lord. Do you long to see God's glory in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6), so that you might follow Him in this life and enjoy Him for all eternity? Please ponder in your heart the reflections of Christ's beauty presented on the following pages.

Olive blossom and fruit

In his book, *The Glory of Christ*, John Owen calls Jesus the "True Olive" and encourages us to receive the "life-giving sap . . . of Christ himself."[1]

1 John Owen, *The Glory of Christ*, (The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, 1994) p. 144.

Creation:
A Gallery of Beauty to Explore . . .

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek . . . to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek Him in His temple (Psalm 27:4).

There is no beauty in nature that is independent of Christ's beauty. All the loveliness we spy in the universe is a mere reflection of God's glory, and all beauty comes from His hand (Ecclesiastes 3:11; Ezekiel 31:9).

Colorful Crab

and a Call to Dine

Jonathan Edwards wrote that God gave us Jesus "that He might be a feast for our souls."[2]

Rose Maple Moth

Silky Spiderweb

Snowy Owl

Crocoite

Praise be to His glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen (Psalm 72:19).

Colorado Autumn

2 Jonathan Edwards, *On Knowing Christ*, (The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh 1990) p. 37.

Beauty in Unity

Starling murmuration can be simple or incredibly complex.

Watch a video of a murmuration in Otmoor, Oxfordshire, England at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eakKfY5aHmY

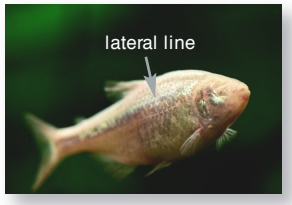
Starling murmuration over Gretna, Scotland, at dusk

Starling flocks over Rome at dusk

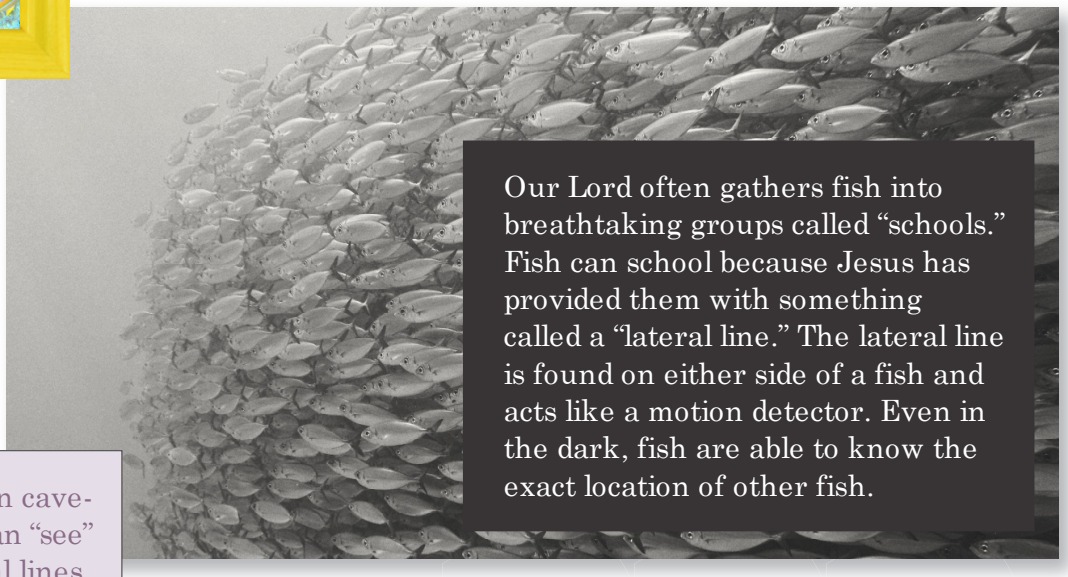
Christ reveals His glory through starlings. Starlings are birds that sometimes form huge flocks numbering in the thousands. At dusk, these flocks often move as one, performing spectacular aerial acrobatics known as a "murmuration." Incredibly, the birds never bump into each other.

Starling
Sturnus vulgaris

Bluestripe Snapper
Lutjanus kasmira



Despite being blind, Mexican cavefish (*Astyanax mexicanus*) can "see" other fish using their lateral lines. What a mercy from God!



Our Lord often gathers fish into breathtaking groups called "schools." Fish can school because Jesus has provided them with something called a "lateral line." The lateral line is found on either side of a fish and acts like a motion detector. Even in the dark, fish are able to know the exact location of other fish.

A school of big-eye scad

Extravagant Beauty

A stunning butterfly and parrot

Chameleon

Our Lord delights to paint His creatures in a rainbow of colors.

Mandarinfish, Pacific Ocean
(*Synchiropus splendidus*)

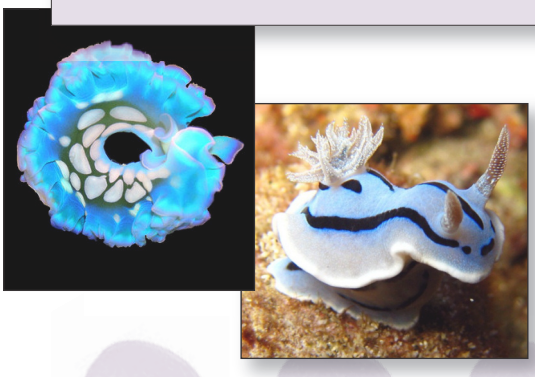
Mantis shrimp, Indian & Pacific Oceans

The eyes of the mantis shrimp (left) are the most complex in the animal kingdom. They probably see more colors than we can—including infrared and ultraviolet. (Our eyes possess three color receptors, but Christ placed *16 different color receptors* into the eyes of the mantis shrimp!)

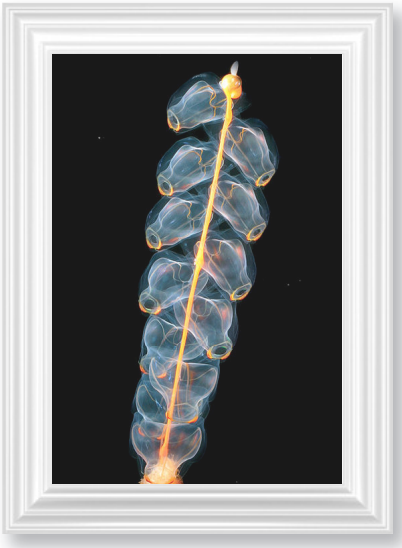
Mandrill, Central Africa
(*Mandrillus sphinx*)

These five creatures are nudibranchs (NEW - duh - brangks) and they live in the sea. Think of them as elegant snails without shells.

Unusual Beauty



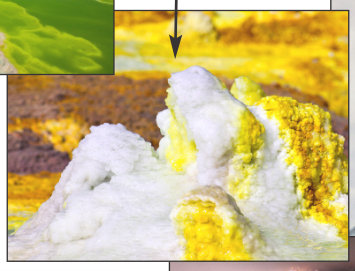
The animal on the right is called a siphonophore (SIGH - fuh - nuh - for). *Marrus orthocanna* lives in the frigid waters of the Arctic Ocean.



Siphonophore
Marrus orthocanna

Were these pictures taken on Mars? No. This is a beautiful but strange place near Dallol, Ethiopia.

Dallol features a volcanic landscape of salt mounds, hot springs, green pools of acid, pillars of sulphur and geysers that spew forth poisonous gas.



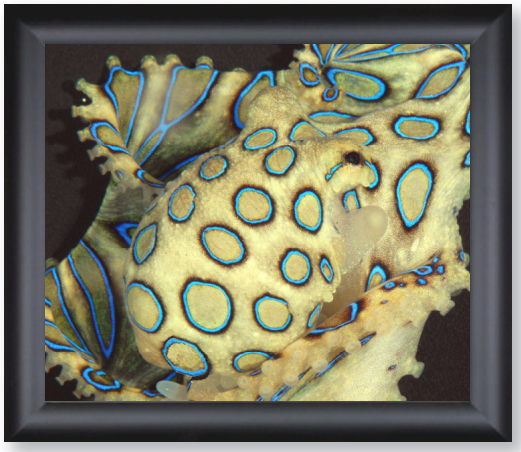
Seen below is two-thousand-degree lava gushing forth from Mt. Etna in Sicily.

Icebergs are stunning, surreal and deadly sculptures from the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ. In 1912, the passenger ship, *Titanic*, sunk after hitting such an iceberg—more than 1,500 people perished.

Deadly nightshade is a common flower possessing a poison that can cause delirium and hallucinations.

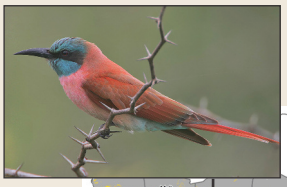
Chile's Chaiten Volcano erupting in May 2008

Dangerous Beauty & the Fear of the Lord

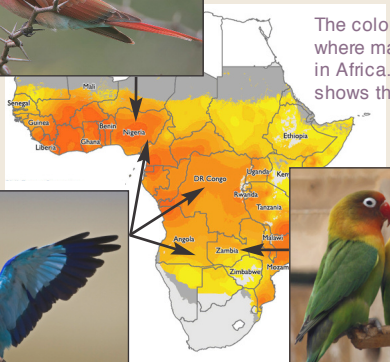


The beautiful blue-ringed octopus (*Hapalochlaena lunulata*) is the size of a golf ball, but the venom from one bite is powerful enough to kill a human being. There is no known antidote.

Northern carmine bee-eater (*Merops nubicus*)

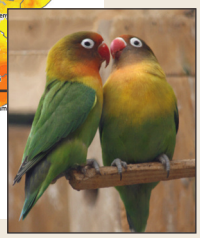


Many of Christ's wonderful creations are not deadly themselves but some live in very dangerous places on Earth.



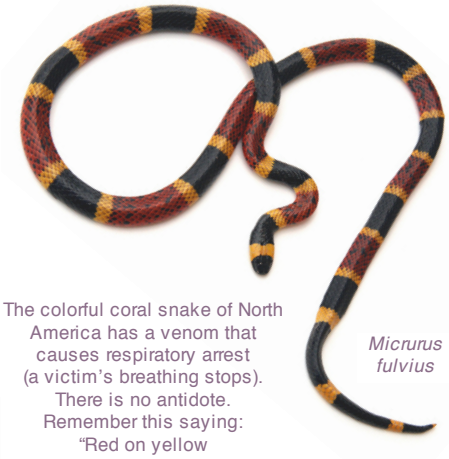
The colored areas are where malaria is found in Africa. (Dark orange shows the highest risk.)

Lilac-breasted roller (*Coracias caudatus*)



Black-cheeked lovebirds (*Agapomis nigrigenis*)

The yellow-fronted woodpecker (*Melanerpes flavifrons*) is found in Brazil where malaria & other tropical diseases are quite prevalent.



The colorful coral snake of North America has a venom that causes respiratory arrest (a victim's breathing stops). There is no antidote. Remember this saying: "Red on yellow will kill a fellow."

Micrurus fulvius

"Beauty from Ashes"

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated 90,000 square miles (233,100 square kilometers) of coast. Yet our merciful and gracious God brought life back.

A crown of beauty instead of ashes (Isaiah 61:3)

Heron

Slope of Mt. Etna

The beauty of Christ's hand can often be seen not long after a volcanic eruption.

Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.[3]

Fireweed growing shortly after the 1988 Yellowstone fire.

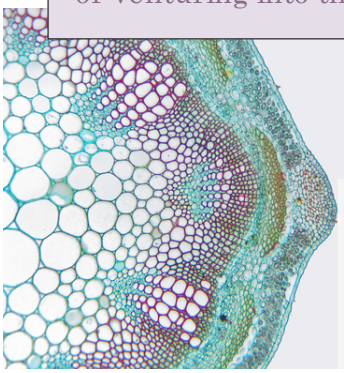
Ground temperature can exceed 1,600° F (850° C) during a raging forest fire. This kills everything. Yet, our Lord Jesus brings the forest back to life because He is the God of enduring life.

Often we need to look below the surface of things to see the beauty Christ has hidden in His creation. Maybe it's getting on our hands and knees or looking through a microscope or venturing into the dark.

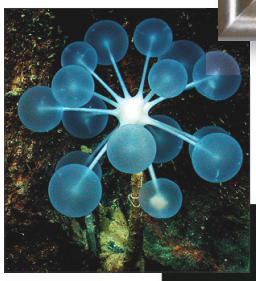
A karst cave in Israel

Scorpions

Hidden Beauties



Cross-section of alfalfa stem as seen under a microscope



A deepsea sponge

A deepsea jellyfish

3 *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* by Thomas O. Chisholm & William M. Runyan

Gospel Beauty

Hyssop (בּוֹאָז in Hebrew) grows as a shrub in Israel and the Middle East. God gave it antiseptic properties and for years people have used it to clean wounds. The plant is drought resistant and grows well in full sun. Bees that frequent its flowers produce a rich, fragrant honey.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean (Psalm 51:7a).

Hyssopus officinalis

Another native to the Middle East is the Queen Anne's lace (right). It is a symbol of the Gospel and a picture of Heaven. The Queen Anne's lace produces a beautiful, composite flower after two years of growth. In the center is a single, crimson floret that stands above the other pure-white florets. This blood-tinged floret has no known *biological* function.

Daucus carota
Queen Anne's lace

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne . . . Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders (Revelation 5:6a, 11).

Snowfall on
Shipka Pass, Bulgaria

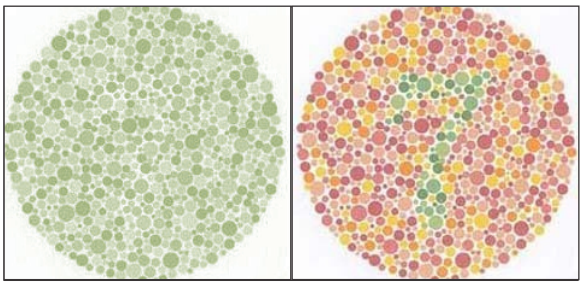
Snowfall provides plants and animals with much-needed moisture, insulation from severe cold and protection from wind. Similarly, God's forgiveness provides a covering for our sin in every way, as completely as a foot of snow blanketing a barren landscape. Through Christ, our sins are buried out of sight—it would be easier to find the surface of the ground in the midst of a raging snowstorm than our sin after we have been forgiven (Psalm 103:12). Our transgressions will never be unearthed.

Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow (Psalm 51:7b).

A VISION TEST

If you're like me, you probably have your eyes checked every once in a while to make sure you're seeing okay. We also need to test our spiritual eyes (Ephesians 1:18), since it is by them that we see Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) and live by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Most of the world cannot recognize Christ's majesty in creation because they suffer from "glory-blindness." For those who love Jesus, a rose, a sunset and a colorful butterfly all radiate the glory of our Creator. But those who do not know Christ cannot see His majesty in these things. Please allow me to illustrate this way: Folks with color-blindness[4] see the two images below as essentially the same. Most people, however, are able to recognize the number 7 in the image on the right. In a similar way, someone with faith in Christ can see the glory of our Lord in nature and in the Gospel, but those lacking faith do not perceive His glory in either (2 Corinthians 4:4), any more than a color-blind person can see the number 7 in the picture. Unless corrected, the unbeliever will never enjoy Christ's glory—now or ever. This is a very serious condition indeed!



Are you red-green color-blind?
Do you see the number 7 in the right-hand image?

So, take this vision test. Do you see anything of Christ's glory in nature and does it bring you joy? If you do, that's good. Now, ask yourself: "Do I also see the glory of Jesus in His dying on a cross to absorb the wrath of His Father against my sins?" If you answer "No," then you are glory-blind. *Yet there is good news*—Jesus not only died on a cross for sin, but rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, so that He might send His Spirit into the world to give spiritual sight to many. "So how do I receive this sight?" you may ask. You receive it by receiving Christ Jesus into your life; by believing in Him and repenting of your sins (John 1:12; Romans 2:4).

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5a).

4 Red-green color-blindness

PHOTO/ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

1 Olive branch © Blanscape/Dreamstime.com
2 Moth © George Bailey/Dreamstime.com
2 Crococite—Juergen Merz
2 Crab—Lt. Elizabeth Crapo, NOAA Corps
2 Colorado autumn © Rick Destree
2 Spider web—Flickr/dorena-wm
2 Snowy owl—David Hemmings
3 Murmurations—Walter Baxter
3 Murmuration—Paolo
3 Murmuration—Brian Robert Marshall
3 Starling © xpixel/Shutterstock
3 Striped snapper—Jim & Becca Wicks
3 Blind fish © Hamsterman/Dreamstime.com
3 Big eye scad school—Steve Dunleavy
4 Chameleon © Eric Isselée/iStockphoto
4 Mandarin fish—Luc Viatour
4 Shrimp—Charlene Mcbride
4 Parrot & Butterfly © LeeYiuTung/iStockphoto
4 Mandrill © Eric Isselée/iStockphoto
4 Nudibranch—Jerry Kirkhart
4 Nudibranch—Stephen Childs
4 Nudibranch—Minette Layne
4 Nudibranch—ka-h_adiving
4 Nudibranch—Raymond™
4 Siphonophore—NOAA
5 Dallol Ethiopia © Guenter Guni/iStockphoto
5 Dallol Ethiopia © Davor Lovincic/iStockphoto
5 Chaiten eruption—Carlos Gutierrez
5 Mt. Etna eruption © RZ Design/Shutterstock
5 Iceberg © Pablo H Caridad/Shutterstock
5 Deadly nightshade— Rosana Prada
5 Bee-eater—Steve Garvie
5 Roller © Gerrit David de Vries/iStockphoto
5 Lovebirds—Snowmanradio
5 Woodpecker—Cláudio Timm
5 Africa map—Malaria Atlas Project
5 Octopus—Roy Caldwell
5 Coral snake © Dave Rodriguez/iStockphoto
6 Egret—Frank Kovalchek
6 Katrina—NOAA
6 Slope of Mt. Etna—USGS
6 Fireweed—Jim Peaco/NPS
6 Diatoms © Jubal Harshaw/Shuttersock
6 Karst cave © Boris Diakovsky/Shutterstock
6 Scorpions—Schristia
6 Alfalfa © Jubalharshaw19/Dreamstime.com
6 Mushrooms © Torres Cesar/iStockphoto
6 Sponge and jellyfish in Marianas Trench Kevin Raskoff/NOAA Office of Ocean Explor.
7 Hyssop © Pistone/Dreamstime.com
7 Queen Anne's © Jovan Svorcan/Shutterstock
7 Shipka Pass—Psy guy
8 Carolina sunrise © Colleen Destree

HIS CREATION

VISIT US AT OUR WEB SITE:
www.hiscreation.com

CREATOR is published quarterly by **HIS CREATION**, PO Box 785, Arvada CO 80001-0785. Copyright © 2013 by **HIS CREATION**. All rights reserved. ***CREATOR*** is offered without charge; however, donations are greatly appreciated!

R.J. DESTREE
Editor

PASTOR CHRIS KAWA
Theology Editor

TREY TIPPIE
Science Editor

KOBUS ERASMUS
MAGGIE RICHARDSEN
Editorial Proofing

KELLEY CARLSON
COLLEEN DESTREE
Art Directors

REED EVANS
Printing

Unless otherwise identified, Scripture taken from the *HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.